**A Vulnerable Adolescent Panel**

**SITUATION**

The growing problem of extrafamilial harms that present a risk to young people in our communities often poses a challenge to professionals. This is complicated by information about children, families and contexts of harm being held across many different agencies, including those outside of usual statutory partners.

**TASK**

To ensure timely and robust information sharing between partner agencies and to provide guidance to professionals working with young people at risk of extrafamilial harm.

**ACTION**

A multiagency information sharing and consultative forum for extra familial harm – the Vulnerable Adolescent Panel (VAP) – was developed with chairing and leadership through a Steering Group comprising health, police, children’s social care and the youth offending service. The aim of the panel is to provide expert, evidence-based advice and guidance to professionals working with young people at risk of extrafamilial harm and to provide a forum for appropriate multi-agency information sharing to ensure that needs and risks are fully understood.

Systemwide commitment to tackling child exploitation was evidenced by strong multi-agency commitment to membership including CAMHS, local hospitals, schools and specialist education provision, substance misuse and youth work agencies, looked after children’s teams and Barnardo’s.

**RESULT**

Multiagency development of the panel supported mutual agreement of its purpose and aims from inception together with a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for success. Working together to a shared vision fostered the development of strong and trusting professional relationships leading to improved understanding of partner agency roles, responsibilities, strengths and challenges. This has supported creativity and innovation in the development and success of additional collaborative projects such as plans for a multiagency community of practice for child exploitation.

Strong relationships have fostered exemplary information sharing between agencies which has in turn facilitated a shared understanding of risk and has informed robust plans for young people. Identification of additional sources of support for young people, whilst keeping their voices at the centre of decision making, has positively contributed to their lives and journeys. Feedback from professionals who refer into VAP has been consistently positive about the impact of information sharing, discussion, and advice at panel upon their work with young people.

The multiagency nature of discussion has led to shared learning as partner agencies share their expertise, for example, CAMHS attendance has led to a strengthened understanding of the impact of trauma upon young people and to lobbying by panel members for trauma informed care training across the system. Members have developed tools and training to address gaps in professional knowledge identified at panel, such as use of appropriate language, and such learning is shared widely, leading directly to improvements in practice.

Pathways have been developed tofeed information and themes about contexts of concern into the Community Safety Partnerships, allowing plans to be developed to address both emerging and existing risk in our communities.

VAP is underpinned by, and strengthens, our belief that as partners working in a developing and complex field, we are stronger and achieve more together.